

[98]

II CARPENTRY.

335 Carpentry plays an important part in the life of the Mongo Negro. The primitive utensils in his house as well as his canoe and his lokole (the Negro telephone with which he spreads his thoughts from village to village) are made of wood.

The making of the canoe and the lokole takes a great deal of work.

The Canoe.

313 The following three kinds of wood, namely, (1) Bokeswa, (2) 316 Lifake, (3) Bomposo, make a good canoe, especially Bokeswa. This tree is much sought after because its wood makes a strong, light canoe.

The Negro who wants a canoe goes into the forest, picks out a nice slender tree, brings out his axe, and fells at his leisure the tree he has chosen. He hacks off the unnecessary branches and hollows the tree out in the rough form of the canoe. (Aulema wato: he shapes the canoe.)

[94] He calls some of his friends together, and they proceed, for payment, of course (nothing for nothing, says the Negro), to hollow out the tree.

318 When they have finished hollowing out the tree, the owner of the canoe calls the wongiwa biatu, the proper canoe maker, a heavy man and one of some account among his fellow villagers. This wongiwa biatu gives a nice, slender form to the canoe with his axe, planes it off nicely, and with the help of the eswa, a small axe, marks off the edge of the canoe with sharp, short, regular grooves.

413 Often the Negroes make their canoes hours away from the 476 nearest water. In order to transport it, they place sticks on the ground and draw the canoe over them. In addition to a number of strong men, all the apes patrias [hope of the fatherland] of the village help with this task. They get a mitalo as a reward and feel themselves on top of the world.

316 The canoe maker is well paid, the price reckoned according to 476 the size of the canoe. Several dogs are slaughtered at the expense of

- 396 the owner, and everyone who has helped gets his share according to
476 the amount of work he has done. [99] Frequently a big sugar-cane
[27] beer spree is started, where disgusting scenes often take place until
finally the drunken men are taken home by their wives. In civilized
Europe it is sometimes not much better.

501 Boats are made just large enough for two men, as well as others
sufficient for a hundred or even a hundred and fifty men. The big
war canoes of the great chief Evoloko of Waka and of the former chief
of Bandaka, a certain Isempoko, are known throughout the region.
The war canoe of the latter was said to hold a hundred and fifty men,
and the edge of this canoe to reach up to the shoulders of a fairly tall
Negro. The ordinary canoe in which Whites travel is, as a rule,
sufficiently large for twenty to thirty oarsmen.

435 The prices of canoes vary, according to size and strength, from
200 to 10,000 mitako.

The Lokole

222 The lokole plays a very large part in the life of the Negro. With-
out the lokole, the life of the Negro would be inconceivable.

The lokole can be best described as the public telephone with
which the Negro makes his thoughts known publicly from village to
village.

The lokole is to the Negro what the trumpet signal is to the
soldier.

The lokole calls the men to meetings, to war, and to the hunt;
the lokole calls all the people, great and small, to the dance. Dur-
ing the dance it is the loyal accompanist until deep in the night; its
monotonous sound brings the enthusiasm of the dancers almost to the
point of frenzy.

The Negro telephones his friends at great distances and explains
what he wants. If two Negroes from the same village or from dif-
ferent villages have a quarrel, they abuse each other over the lokole,
and the whole world is kept fully up-to-date on the details of the dis-
pute. Each one tries to blacken the reputation of the other in the eyes
of the other villagers. If someone dies in the village, it is proclaimed
everywhere the whole night through, by means of the lokole, that